

Letter to the Community

March 31, 2020

Twenty days ago, I took on the challenge of coming out of retirement to help with the COVID-19 response. In less than 3 weeks we have seen our number of cases of people confirmed with COVID-19 go from 1 to 48! The cases we are seeing now were infected sometime in the last two weeks. Since then, the Governor ordered the [“Stay Home, Stay Healthy”](#) mandate. I expect we will continue to see more cases in the next 10 days but then should see the number of new cases declining because most people in our community are following the restrictions in the mandate. Thank you for that!

All the restrictions imposed in the Governor’s mandate are non-pharmaceutical interventions we can implement during a pandemic. The restrictions and the constant messaging are working. The newer cases we are investigating have been observing self-quarantine and have fewer close contacts.

I NEED YOUR HELP. We still have challenges with folks that do not believe they are at risk and continue to move around, party, and meet with friends. Hopefully they will not spread the disease to their more vulnerable loved ones. So please, stay at home. Keep your young adults and children from mingling and playing with others. Do as many virtual meet-ups as you can to keep from social isolation but please keep your distance. Stay home. Stay healthy.

In the last 20 years of my active public health career, we have been preparing for a pandemic. We met with community partners, asked everyone to prepare a continuity of operations plan, worked with partners on crisis standards of care, and hoped we would never have to dust off the plan books. Plans are never final, they are always in draft format because situations change. We were preparing for a FLU pandemic and we have a COVID pandemic. The diseases have some similarity, but they are not the same.

Since the discovery of COVID-19 we have learned a lot but have much more to learn. It may seem that recommendations change frequently but that is only because we are learning every day. We know the virus needs us to stay alive. It needs people to pass it to others. We can stop the spread of this disease!

To keep up with the most up-to-date information, please look at trusted websites like the [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC), [Washington State Department of Health](#), or the [Thurston County Health Department](#) websites. There is one message that has not changed. KEEP YOUR DISTANCE, STAY 6 FEET AWAY FROM ANYBODY! WASH YOUR HANDS! STAY HOME WHEN YOU ARE SICK! KEEP YOUR HANDS AWAY FROM YOUR FACE! These are the actions you can control and can protect you from getting the infection.

Folks, the pandemic is here. This is not a practice drill. This is the real thing. Please stay home, stay safe, and stay healthy.

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